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ABSTRACT

Attitudes of journalism faculty members regarding liberal arts in the journalism curriculum are described, based on the results of a 1976 survey of 5,948 faculty members in nine professional program areas. Comparisons are also made to 1958 survey findings. As a group, the journalism faculty were more favorable in general toward liberal studies than were the other eight professional faculties. A trend appearing since 1958 is that journalism faculty in increased numbers expressed curricular preference for those liberal studies that have relevance to journalism. This trend was evident in the other eight professions as well. The journalism faculty also felt that liberal studies should be allocated a lesser proportion of curricular time relative to that allocated to professional studies. At the same time, there is a trend toward taking the interests and aspirations of individual students into account in establishing academic requirements for professional programs. The faculty expressed an increased reluctance to retain extensive lists of required subjects, and a corresponding press toward making both the selection and time of scheduling of specific liberal arts subjects at the option of students, and presumably, their academic advisors. (SW)

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Opinions of Professors of Journalism Regarding The Liberal Arts in Journalism Curriculums

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In 1958, 3,262 faculty members in nine professional program areas were surveyed to determine their attitudes toward liberal studies as part of their curriculums (Dressel, Paul, Mayhew, Lewis, and McGrath, Earl; 1959). In 1976, substantially the same survey instrument was completed by 5,948 faculty members representing the same professions (Lyons, Mack; 1978). The findings presented here refer particularly to the responses from the Journalism faculty members.

Journalism Faculty Place High Value on Liberal Arts

As a group, the Journalism faculty in 1976 were more favorably disposed towards liberal studies in general than were any of the other eight professional faculties. The numbers shown in Table 2 are average numbers of responses indicating a pro-liberal arts orientation to the 26 attitudinal statements included in the survey instrument. This average for Journalism in 1976 was 17.88. Converted to percentages, this means that nearly 69 percent of the responses from Journalism faculty were favorable to liberal studies. The corresponding statistics in 1958 were 19.01 and 73 percent. Engineering faculty had the lowest "index of favorability," but even so, 55 percent of the Engineering faculty

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responses were favorable. All faculties except those in music exhibited a small but perhaps disturbing loss of affection for liberal studies.

More Faculty Want Liberal Studies to be Relevant to Journalism

Some data on responses to specific attitudinal items may be instructive. Nearly all those responding from Journalism faculties agreed that all students should be required to take some liberal subjects, and virtually none thought that liberal studies should be relegated to adult education; however, about 10 percent felt that their brighter students could "pick up" sufficient liberal arts experience "on their own." About 15 percent felt that liberal studies should be specifically adapted to the needs of students in the professions and nearly one-third agreed that liberal arts requirements should be met with courses related to the professional specialty, but only about 10 percent favored giving liberal arts professors appointments in professional schools. These and responses to similar items indicate a trend since 1958 toward insisting that those liberal studies which are included in the curriculum should have greater relevance to Journalism. This trend is clearly evident in the other eight professions as well.

Most Journalism Faculty Consider the 25-75 Ratio Too High

Although nearly 90 percent of the Journalism faculty agree that students who combine broad liberal arts education with professional training have an advantage with respect to future vocational advancement, and less than 10 percent felt that their own students were required to take too much work in liberal arts, more than three out of five respondents preferred that 50 percent or less of their students' time should be occupied with liberal studies. This seems to imply that a majority disagree with the ACEJ standard calling for a one-fourth-three-fourths ratio between courses in Journalism and Mass Communication and

courses in the arts and sciences. Nevertheless, in respect to the amount of curricular time they would recommend to be devoted to liberal studies, Journalism faculties are much more liberal arts oriented than are any of the other eight professional faculties--nearly 40 percent prefer that over half of the curriculum be devoted to liberal studies whereas, except for Education, five percent or less of the other faculties preferred this amount. All nine professions gave evidence of preferring to reduce the size of the liberal arts component in their curriculums. This tendency was strongest among Journalism faculty, probably because they have had their own professional courses confined to a much smaller segment of the four year program than has been the case with most of the other professions. The Engineering accreditation body for example expects only one eighth of the student's time to be spent in liberal studies.

Journalists Prefer to Make Specific Liberal Studies Optional Rather Than Required

Table 3 shows the percentage of Journalism faculty who would require their students to take work in various liberal arts fields. While the differences between the 1958 and 1976 studies were small--usually fewer than five percentage points--a smaller proportion of 1976 respondents would require students to take work in twelve of the eighteen liberal arts disciplines. Thirty percent or more of the responding Journalism faculty in 1976 would require work in English composition, history, political science, economics, literature, sociology, psychology, mathematics. and speech. Absent from this list but included in the 1958 list are philosophy and foreign languages. A list of disciplines that students would be required or "encouraged" to take by two-thirds of the Journalism faculty in 1976 would include none of the natural sciences and none of the arts, but would include foreign languages, philosophy, and speech.

There May Be a Trend Among Journalism Professors to Favor Social Sciences More, and Natural Sciences and Humanities Less

Percentages of faculty members who would require their students to take some work in specific disciplines declined in seven out of nine subjects in the humanities and four out of four in the natural sciences. On the other hand, these percentages increased for three of the four social science disciplines. The individual differences in percentages were small, but the trend is perhaps too consistent to be ignored.

Discussion

The trend toward professionalism that has characterized higher education in the United States for at least fifty years is apparently continuing, and the faculties that offer professional programs in Journalism are in step with this trend. At the same time, there is a trend toward taking the interests and aspirations of individual students into account in establishing academic requirements for professional programs. The former is manifest in evidence that Journalism faculty in increased numbers express curricular preference for those liberal studies that have relevance to Journalism, and that liberal studies be allocated a lesser proportion of curricular time relative to that allocated to professional studies. Consideration for individual students' interests and aspirations is manifest in an increased reluctance to retain extensive lists of required subjects, and a corresponding press toward making both the selection and the time of scheduling of specific liberal arts subjects at the option of the student and, presumably, his/her academic advisor.

TABLE 1

Numbers of Schools and Faculty Members
Participating in Surveys,
1958 and 1976

Professional Fields	McGrath Study (1958)	Current Study (1976)	
		Schools	Faculty
Agriculture	824	28	1033
Business Administration	277	65	742
Education	582	148	1284
Engineering	595	51	800
Home Economics	18	27	585
Journalism	201	25	163
Music	351	35	261
Nursing	318	44	689
Pharmacy	96	33	391
TOTAL	3262	456	5948

NOTE: The McGrath Study did not report the number of participating schools.

TABLE 2

Index of Favorable Attitudes toward the Liberal Arts by Professional Fields

Field	1958 Study		1976 Study		Diff. in Index 1956-76
	Number	Index	Number	Index	
Nursing	318	19.25	574	17.42	-1.83
Journalism	201	19.01	144	17.88	-1.13
Business	277	18.39	495	15.78	-2.61
Education	582	18.35	859	15.83	-2.52
Pharmacy	96	17.49	349	15.49	-2.00
Home Economics	18	17.17	512	15.88	-1.29
Agriculture	824	16.82	1012	15.38	-1.44
Engineering	595	16.18	748	14.23	-1.95
Music	351	16.18	170	16.38	0.20

TABLE 3

Liberal Arts Disciplines which Would Be Required or Would Be Left at Option of Students by Journalism Faculty

Discipline	Percent Who Would Require		Percent Who Would Have Enrollment Optional	
	1976	1958	1976	1958
Art	12.7	14.4	45.5	52.7
Music	6.1	4.5	60.0	63.5
English Composition	94.0	95.5	1.2	----
History	75.0	78.6	1.2	2.5
Literature	61.2	77.6	9.1	5.0
Speech	35.2	29.0	26.1	31.5
Philosophy	27.7	36.3	23.5	19.4
Foreign Languages	27.3	40.0	31.5	19.0
Religion	1.8	8.5	64.2	62.2
Mathematics	35.2	31.8	26.7	32.8
Biology	18.8	19.9	39.4	39.3
Chemistry	8.5	10.4	57.5	45.8
Physics	6.7	13.9	51.5	43.2
Physiology	6.1	7.0	65.5	59.0
Political Science	69.7	69.5	7.9	5.5
Economics	65.5	63.5	7.3	5.0
Sociology	51.5	48.8	10.3	14.4
Psychology	47.9	55.7	10.3	12.4

REFERENCES

Dressel, Paul, Mayhew, Lewis, & McGrath, Earl; Liberal Arts as Viewed by Faculty Members in Professional Schools, New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, Bureau of Publications, 1959.

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